5: Métraux E-4 (no date) 1948 SM4 Guarani SM4

THE GUARANÍ

By Alfred Métraux

TRIBAL DIVISIONS

The area inhabited by the *Guaraní* (map 1, *No. 1*; see Volume 1, map 7) has shrunk considerably since the 16th century. Today the *Guaraní* who have preserved their cultural identity form isolated islands in Paraguay and southern Brazil. The subtribes mentioned by Spanish conquistadors and missionaries have disappeared, and the names which designate modern *Guaraní* groups are fairly recent and appear in the literature only in the 18th century. Therefore, it is necessary to deal with ancient and modern *Guaraní* as if they were separate entities. The *Guaraní* language, however, is still spoken by Mestizos, or acculturated Indians, in most of the territory where it was used at the time of the Conquest. The rural population of Paraguay is often called *Guaraní*. Therefore, in order to avoid confusion between these modern civilized *Guaraní* and their primitive contemporaries, we shall always refer to the latter as *Caingué*.

Guaraní of the 16th and 17th centuries.—The *Guaraní* were first known as *Carijó* or *Cario*, but the name *Guaraní* finally prevailed in the 17th century. At this time, the *Guaraní* were the masters of the Atlantic Coast from Barra de Cananea to Rio Grande do Sul, (lat. 26°–33° S., long. 48°–52° W.) and from there their groups extended to the Paraná, Uruguay, and Paraguay Rivers.

Guaraní groups, called by the early chroniclers "Guaraní de las islas," *Chandris*, or *Chandules*, lived in the 16th century on the islands of the Río de la Plata, and on the southern side of the Paraná Delta from San Isidro to the vicinity of the Carcarañá River (lat. 34° S., long. 58° W.) There were some *Guaraní* enclaves along the Uruguayan shore, at Martín Chico, and from San Lazaro to San Salvador. Pottery vessels of unmistakable *Guaraní* origin have been found near San Francisco Soriano and Concordia in Uruguay, on the island of Martín García and at Arroyo Malo, between the Luján River and the Paraná de las Palmas River.

On the eastern side of the Uruguay River, the borderline between the *Charrua* and the bulk of the *Guaraní* nation ran near Yapeyú. On the

5: Métraux E-4 (no date) 1948 SM4 Guarani SM4

ARCHEOLOGY OF THE GUARANÍ AREA

Many archeological finds have been made in the area formerly inhabited by the *Guaraní*, but only a few systematic investigations have ever been undertaken of ancient sites or cemeteries. The attribution of some of the remains unearthed in former *Guaraní* territory is often uncertain because the *Guaraní* seem to have been late comers in the regions where we find them in the 16th century. They were preceded by people of different prehistoric cultures, some of which, such as the *Caingang*, have survived up to the present. The main problems center around classification of stone implements, which cannot always be easily distinguished from those produced by the early non-*Guaraní* population. Pottery, however, leaves little or no margin for doubt. The aboriginal occupants of Paraguay or southern Brazil had either no ceramics or else only a very crude ware. *Guaraní* ware presents the following features: A corrugated decoration produced by thumb impressions on the soft clay, linear designs in red and black on a whitish background, and the use of large conical chicha jars as funeral urns (pls. 11, 12). 172●

There is a striking resemblance between the pottery of the ancient *Tupinamba* of the coast (Netto, 1885; Ihering, 1904) and that of the *Guaraní* of Paraguay. The modern *Chiriguano*, descendants of *Guaraní* invaders from Paraguay, still make chicha jars almost identical in shape and decoration to those which are so often unearthed in their home country. Moreover, typical *Guaraní* vases have been found associated with rosin labrets, a lip ornament still worn by modern *Caingud*. [323] [171] [301]

Direct, or primary, urn burial was the usual form of interment among the *Guaraní* and persists among the *Chiriguano* of Bolivia. Archeology has amply confirmed the statements of early writers. The corpse was forced with the limbs flexed into a jar and covered with another vessel. [764] [171]

Ihering (1895, 1904), Mayntzhusen (1912), Ullrich (1906), Kunert (1890, 1891, 1892), Kunike (1911), Meyer (1896), Ambrosetti (1895 b), Vellard (1934), and Linné (1936) have described isolated finds. Max Schmidt (1932) has given a list of recent discoveries and has attempted to make a classification of the rich archeological material in the Museum of Asunción. Pottery of unmistakable *Guaraní* origin has been collected on the islands of the Paraná Delta (pl. 11, *top, center*). They have been published and discussed by L. M. Torres (1913) and Outes (1917, 1918). Lothrop (1932, pp. 122-146) has given us a careful description of the results of his investigation in a *Guaraní* cemetery at Arroyo Malo, a small tributary of the Luján River, east of El Tigre, in the Province of Buenos Aires. Serrano (1936) has dealt with *Guaraní* archeology in connection with his study of the ancient native cultures of Uruguay.

The ware found in areas historically occupied by *Guaraní* tribes consists mainly of funeral urns, large plates or vessels used as lids for these urns, and some pots which formed part of the funerary equipment.

5: Métraux E-4 (no date) 1948 SM4 Guarani SM4

172 Funeral urns, which originally were chicha jars, are of two main types: (1) those decorated on the upper part with rows of corrugated impressions or markings produced either with the fingers or with a stick, and (2) painted ones.

The urns of the first category usually have a conical shape with a bulging upper part and a low outflaring or direct rim (pl. 11, *bottom, left*). Those of the second type are usually biconical with a flat or rounded bottom and a direct rim which often presents a median ridge (pl. 12, *a*). The height of the urns normally varies between 40 to 70 cm. (16 to 28 in.) and their diameter between 46 to 76 cm. (19 to 30 in.). A few specimens are one meter (3 ft.) high.

Smaller vessels are (1) undecorated, (2) covered on their entire outer surface by fingernail marks (pl. 11), (3) painted (pl. 12), and (4) painted on the inside and decorated with fingernail marks or corrugated impressions on the outside.

Several nail-incised vessels were found by Ambrosetti (1895 b) on the Alto Paraná and by Lothrop (1932, pp. 134–135) at Arroyo Malo, near Buenos Aires, and at Paraná-Guazú.

Most of the specimens of small ware known up to the present are shallow bowls, or bowls with inverted rims. Some painted specimens have a characteristic biconical shape with a flat bottom. A few globular pots with outflaring rims seem to have been used in cooking. A single specimen with a tubular neck has been published by Vellard (1934, fig. 8, *3*).

Some of the funeral urns and wide bowls found by Lothrop at Arroyo Malo are covered with a grayish slip and are adorned with red paint on the exterior.

The decoration of the polychrome urns and bowls consists generally of red lines on a whitish background, but sometimes white patterns have been traced on a red background. Often the red designs are underscored by black strokes or bordered by incisions. On a few specimens coarse red patterns have been applied directly on the surface of the vessel. The motifs are always geometrical. They may be described as sigmoid curves, labyrinths, Greek frets, and elaborations of the chevron. A few vessels are decorated with plain red bands on a white background.

Many urns show on their lower portions striations resulting from the use of corn husks in the smoothing process.

Guaraní vessels are, as a rule, without handles, though, according to Mayntzhusen (1912, p. 465), they may occur in a few instances. Some vessels were suspended through holes in the rim or through lateral prominences.

At Arroyo Malo were found some clay "hemispheres," or lumps decorated with incised patterns. Lothrop (1932, p. 143) calls them fire

5: Métraux E-4 [no date] 1948 SM4 Guarani SM4

dogs, that is to say, supports for pots, a hypothesis completely unconfirmed. No object of that type has been found in any other *Guaraní* region. 172

A fragment of a double vessel found at Arroyo Malo suggests a type of bowl used by the *Chiriguano*, though these modern vessels are obviously copied after European yerba maté containers. An effigy vessel collected at Arroyo Malo is definitely alien to *Guaraní* culture as known through archeology. [415] [171]

Crude stone drills, knives, hammers, and arrow-shaft polishers are listed by Mayntzhusen (1912, p. 463) among the stone objects he picked up from refuse heaps on the upper Paraná River. He also mentions quartz lip plugs. Simple neolithic stone axes without any groove have been found in *Guaraní* sites of the upper Paraná River, on the island of Martín García, and at Arroyo Malo. Lothrop (1932, p. 145) describes two fragmentary bolas from Arroyo Malo. One is well made with a broad groove; the other is roughly shaped with a narrow groove. Outes (1917, fig. 28) figures also a grooved bola obtained at Martín García. The bola was not a *Guaraní* weapon and its use seems to have been limited to the *Guaraní* of the Delta.

Hammerstones, roughly shaped by abrasion and including some pitted ones, have come to light in the excavations of Arroyo Malo.

The bone artifacts which Mayntzhusen claims to have collected on ancient sites of the Paraná River include needles, weaver daggers, spatulae, fishhooks, and flutes. He also discovered perforated shell disks and some human or animal teeth which were parts of a necklace.

THE CONQUEST

No mineral wealth has ever been exploited in Paraguay, but metal objects found among the aborigenes of this country in the 16th century brought about the conquest of the entire basin of the Rio de la Plata. The gold and silver, which members of the Solís expedition obtained from the *Guaraní* and other Indians of this region, had come originally from the *Inca* Empire. At the end of the 15th century, probably under the reign of Inca Yupanqui, bands of *Guaraní* had crossed the Chaco to raid the peaceful *Chané* along the *Inca* frontier and even attacked tribes directly under *Inca* rule. Some of these *Guaraní* bands settled in the conquered territories; others returned loaded with loot. Groups, small and large, followed the first invaders and renewed their assaults against the "people of the metal." The number of metal objects which reached Paraguay and the Rio de la Plata in this manner must have been considerable for, from the beginning of the Conquest, regions which actually had nothing to entice the Spaniards were the object of their most violent covetousness. These regions became the gateway to El Dorado. 175 648 [316]

The first positive information on the "Sierra de la Plata" or "Tierra

5: Métraux E-4 (no date) 1948 SM4 Guarani SM4

influence. The southernmost *Guaraní*, who lived in a harsh climate, followed the example of the *Chavrua* and wore skin cloaks. In some *Caingué* groups, men wear a loincloth (hence the name *Chiripá*); in others they pass a piece of cloth between the legs and tuck it under a belt of human hair or fibers (hence the name, *Baticola*, "crupper"). Today cotton ponchos are sometimes worn by men.

Ornaments.—The distinctive lip ornament of ancient and modern *Guaraní* is a long T-shaped stick made of jataiy resin; labrets of stone or bone were exceptional.[2a] Women hang triangular shell pendants from their ears. In the 16th century, men wore huge shell-disk necklaces, which have often been discovered in archeological sites. A few privileged individuals suspended on their chest pendants of silver or copper plates which had reached Paraguay from Perú.

At ceremonies, modern *Caingué* men wear feather wreaths, cotton sashes fringed with feathers, or seed necklaces with feather tassels. Pairs of these necklaces are crossed over the chest. Children's and women's necklaces are strung with pyramidal wooden beads, wooden or bone pendants carved into human or animal forms, seeds, small gourds, fish vertebrae, pendants made of toucan skin, and other objects.

Feather cloaks, formerly worn by famous chiefs, are no longer seen, but feather bracelets and diadems are still used by shamans or participants in religious ceremonies. On some headdresses, feathers were mounted on a woven frontlet, a technique suggesting Andean influence. Feather garlands were sometimes tied on top of the head in the form of rudimentary bonnets. The *Mbyá* wear bracelets, garters, and anklets of human hair. Belts of hair are worn only by men. Finger rings of palm fruits or iguana tails seem now to have become fashionable.

The circular tonsure of the ancient *Guaraní*, still used by some *Caingué* groups, did not extend to the forehead, as among the *Tupinamba*, but was similar to that of Franciscan monks.

Painting.—The use of urucú for body paint is widespread, but that of genipa seems to be limited to the Brazilian *Caingué*. Other groups substitute for it the juices of several plants or a mixture of charcoal and honey or wax. Traditional facial designs are dots and stripes, sometimes applied with bamboo stamps.

The ancient *Itatin* rubbed ashes from bones of birds of prey or swift animals into cuts made in their skin to improve their dexterity in archery.

TRANSPORTATION

Boats.—The ancient literature rarely mentions dugout canoes though they must have been common on the Paraguay and Paraná Rivers. The Paraguayan *Caingué* live on streams that are unsuited to boats and consequently make only a few dugouts or bamboo rafts, mainly for crossing

[2a] Today labrets have fallen into disuse.

5: Métraux E-4 (no date) 1948 SM4 Guarani SM4
[P. 90-A]

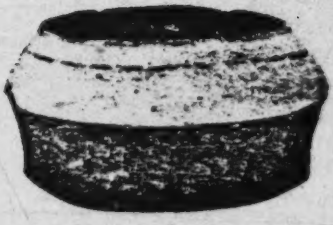
PLATE 11.—Fingernail-marked Guaraní ware. *Top:* Sherds from Martín García, Argentina. *Center:* Vessels from Arroyo Malo, Paraná Delta. *Bottom:* Vessels from Paraguay. Funerary urn at left. (*Top*, after Bruzzone, 1931; *center*, after Lothrop, 1932; *bottom*, courtesy Max Schmidt.)

5: Métraux E-4 (no date) 1948 SM4 Guarani SM4
Apapocuva

[P 90-B]

172
415

a



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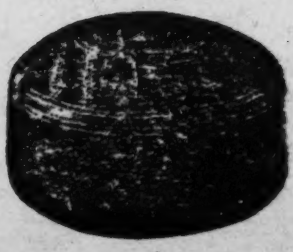

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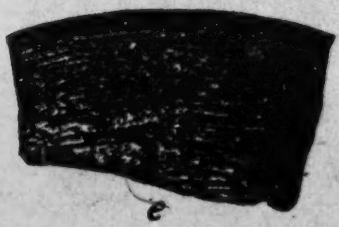

e

PLATE 12.—**Guaraní and other pottery from Paraguay.** *a*, *b*, Painted; *c*, plain; *d*, *e*, probably *Mbayá-Guana* incised ware. (Courtesy Max Schmidt.)

/333 cont./

E
172
131
[114]

The archeological arguments of those who believe in a vast extension of the Guarani into Argentina rest on the occurrence of burials of adults in urns in the provinces of Salta and Jujuy. Recently I conducted excavations in several pre-Hispanic cemeteries of this region (Candelaria department, Salta prov.), and I was able to satisfy myself that the peoples who left us these great necropolises had nothing in common with the Chiriguano from a cultural and anthropological point of view. The funerary urns I brought to light are entirely different from those of the ancient Guarani, and the funerary furnishings include no piece which could be attributed either closely or distantly to the Guarani.

T-G
[764]

Burials of adults in urns is not in any way characteristic of the culture of the Tupi-Guarani Indians, and, I might say, even the opposite. Already in 1905 Outes (1) in a very well-documented monograph had proved that the cemeteries of Rosario de Lerma and San Pedro de Jujuy, which Boman (1) considered as Guarani, in no way constituted proofs of a Guarani migration into northwestern Argentina. Nordenskiöld (10, pp. 184-189) and myself (Métraux, 2, pp. 271-276) have resumed study of this question, and our results entirely confirm those of Outes (1). Therefore, as much from the historic as from the ethnographic point of view, boundaries other than the ones I have indicated could not be assigned to the ancient Chiriguano.

C A 415 171 /406 cont./ following observation: "The dispersion and evolution of a type of pottery whose /407/ origin must be assigned to the peoples near the Isthmus of Panama can be due only to the Arawak, who spread it among the nations living beyond the Andes, in regions as southerly as the Chaco and the territory of Misiones (1).

1. Ambrosetti (2, p. 714) as a matter of fact represents Kainguá vessels with a circular foot. I doubt very much that these pots reproduce a primitive type. They are badly fired, badly modeled, asymmetric, and the foot, which is fastened to the vessel when the latter is finished, is easily detached from it.

These vessels are perhaps crude imitations of European pottery.

A 171 In South America the Arawak have been the propagators of Central-American culture among the primitive tribes located east of the Andes."

C A 415 171 C [126] 10. The distribution of vessels with a ribbed belly, of which I acquired a marvelous specimen in the Caipipendí valley (Plate XXVI, 2), is almost the same as that of the "compotes," and we can, as with the latter, rank them with the pottery which shows a Central-American origin /Fig. 72 appears here/ and whose dispersion was the work of the Arawak (Jijon y Caamaño, p. 5, Fig. 1 D).

C 415 171 C [172] 11. The vessel of Plate XXVII, 2 is composed of two superimposed domes: one in the shape of a truncated cone, the other rounded. It comes from Ivu and is the only specimen of this form that I encountered in the course of my trip. An identical vessel was dug up on the upper Paraná by Ambrosetti (3, plate between pp. 256-257, Fig. 5). Similar receptacles are still in use by the Yuruná /Yuruna/ Indians of the lower Xingú (Steinen, 1, plate between pp. 266-267). The presence of vessels of this type among the ancient Guarani authorizes us to suppose that our specimen from Ivu represents /408/ the survival of an ancient form of Guarani pottery which the Chiriguano have not abandoned.

C & 415 171 172

1/1 [See p. 179--Analyst]
2/1 [See p. 183--Analyst]

C /23 cont./
302 Viedma among the Chiriguano men (104), and Nordenskiöld

C
[113]

104. Viedma: Descripción de la Provincia de Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Colección Angelis, Vol. 3. Buenos Aires, 1936. Written 1793. Page 181. According to Nordenskiöld.

found it among the women in the valley of Caipipendi (105).

105. Nord. 2, p. 85.

The latter used for that the leaves of a plant that they call "tajú" (tayú = lapacho).

Ee 301 304 174 Gi 301 172 With respect to body deformations we can suppose that it was once a common custom among the Chané and Chiriguano to wear a "tembetá" in the pierced lower lip. Of the Guaraní of ancient times it has been stated that the men had this tembetá, and the custom is confirmed by prehistoric finds (106).

106. Cf. Antonio Serrano, op. cit., p. 122.

Ee 301 174 The form, material, and dimensions of these tembetá were varied and varied regionally. What was the shape of the tembetá that the Guaraní had when at the beginning of the 16th century they emigrated to the spurs of the Cordillera? We do not know. Neither do we know whether or not the Chané had the tembetá when they were enslaved by the Chiriguano. We Ee [179] [325] can assume that the metal tembetás of the Chiriguano and the Chané in their present form have their origin in the period after their contacts with the ancient Peruvians, /24/ since they did not know the technique of working metal and even today C 301 most of their tembetás are made by nearby mestizos or whites, C who make them to their taste. According to Chomé's (107) [113]

107. "Lettre du père Ignace Chomé." Lettres édifiantes et curieuses. New edition, Vol. 8, Paris, 1781, p. 326. According to Nordenskiöld 2, p. 73.